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WRITTEN ON THE FACE: RACE AND EXPRESSION IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *NEVER LET ME GO*

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In 1872 Charles Darwin published *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* in which he sought to show that the origins of human facial expressions could be found in the expressions of animals, an argument which formed part of his response to the continuing debates on evolution sparked by the *Origin of Species* (1859). However, in making this argument Darwin was also able to conclude that "all the chief expressions exhibited by man are the same throughout the world," and that "the young and the old of widely different races, both with man and animals, express the same state of mind by the same movements" (359). Darwin's theory thus had implications not only for man's relationship to animals, but also for the relationship between different human races; the universal facial expressions of man proved that all races had evolved from the same species and not, as the polygenists of the time argued, that races had evolved from different origins. Although there has since been much discussion of whether expressions and emotions are universally human,[1] Darwin's thesis remains a powerful indictment of scientific racism. For Sarah Winter, "Darwin's *Expression* demonstrates that, prior to modern genetics, the biological species unity of humanity can be clearly defined—and the biological status of race refuted" (130), and in this sense Darwin "prefigures a postracial science" (131).

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The postracial science to which Winter refers is the widely publicized finding of the Human Genome Project that race has no biological meaning, that, as Bill Clinton famously put it, "in genetic terms, all human beings, regardless of race, are more than 99.9 percent the same." An immediate and positive finding of a project whose other applications have yet to be fully realized, the declaration that the concept of race has no genetic basis was a striking symbol of human unity that appeared to bring genetic explanations of racial difference to an end. Yet scientists have continued to work with racial categorizations. Social and cultural concepts of race continue to be incorporated into scientific methodologies as a way of eliciting genetic differences (and consequently differences in health) between racial or ethnic groups, often with problematic results. For example, in the case of the development of BiDil, a drug designed to treat congestive heart failure in African Americans, Jonathan Kahn has shown how, based on the incorrect statistic that African Americans are twice as likely to develop congestive heart failure as white Americans, BiDil was transformed from a drug designed for all heart failure patients to an "ethnic" drug (3). Race becomes a "valuable surrogate" (Kahn 46) for more complex patterns in genetic variation, which, in a commercially driven environment, are subsumed into more generalized, scientifically imprecise, racial groupings. In the UK, researchers have shown how, despite the "absence of any universally accepted definitions" (Smart et al. 408) of race in science, genetic scientists working in UK biobanks and leading biomedical science journals continue to use racial classifications, many adopting UK National Census classifications of ethnicity, popular because of their "stability, rather than the scientific acuity of the measures" (416). When considered alongside increasingly popular genetic ancestry tracing technologies that are often marketed toward ethnic minorities and that promise to pinpoint individuals' racial origins, it would seem that a biological concept of race is enjoying a revival. Rather than prefiguring a postracial science as Winter suggests, Darwin's insights on facial expression might provide an important reminder of human similarity in an era where race in science is being both effaced and reinvigorated.

This essay argues that Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go* addresses both the contradictions of an ostensibly postracial genomic science and the capacity of facial expressions to disrupt racial thinking. Ishiguro's tale of human clones brought up at a kind of boarding school, Hailsham, before preparing for their future roles as carers and organ donors is not a novel that engages with science, race, and the relationship between the two in any overt way. Ishiguro provides little scientific detail about how human cloning has arisen and sets his novel in the recent past when human cloning did not

exist in order to avoid interpretations of the novel as, in his words, "a chilling warning about the way we're going with cloning and biotechnology" (Interview 202). The novel appears to reprise the themes and concerns of Ishiguro's previous fiction, only in a different guise: the idea of growing up without parents explored in *When We Were Orphans* (2000) and the narrative of an individual looking back over a career, and who has acquiesced to a system that represses him, depicted in *The Remains of the Day* (1989). Critics have largely concluded that *Never Let Me Go* is not about human cloning, instead interpreting the novel variously as referring to class (Fluet 267), the holocaust (Whitehead 76), the relations between humans and animals (Summers-Bremner 145), "vulnerable actors in our modern economic order" (Black 785), or more generally as a "disquieting look at the effects of dehumanization on any group that's subject to it" (Atwood).[2] While the novel is clearly not a comment on the dangers of cloning and does lend itself to multiple kinds of interpretation, the critical evasion of its biotechnological premise obscures the ways in which it engages with genomic science and with the role of that science in shaping contemporary ideas about race and racial identity.

Never Let Me Go draws a subtle analogy between the lives of the clones and the racially marginalized, exposing the tensions in contemporary science over the question of race. Identifying correspondences between the exploitation of the clones and the marginalization of Britain's nonwhite immigrants and migrant workers, as well as similarities between the clones' functional education and the education of the colonized, I demonstrate that despite appearing postracial, the world of the novel is saturated in racialized forms of discrimination. Ishiguro's analogy uncovers the ways in which race is erased on the basis that it is biologically meaningless, yet continues to be employed as a concept in the biosciences; the clones, apparently raceless yet segregated on the basis of their genetic difference, are the product of this paradox. Their condition reveals the ironic outcome of the finding that race has no biological meaning, which is that "any exploitation of nonwhite workers is expiated symbolically through the scientific admission of their human equality" (Roof 146). In a world without race, forms of racism persist, and the novel reveals the continuance of racial thought and racism in a postracial era.

The essay then turns to examine how as *Never Let Me Go* offers a critique of twenty-first-century postracialism, it also presents an alternative, postracial vision of a form of kinship based on a nongenetic, nonracial affinity. I identify an emphasis in Kathy's narrative on describing and interpreting facial expressions in place of physical characteristics. Kathy's privileging of looks and faces not only enables her to achieve a level of emotional comprehension not possible

through her education; it is also particularly significant in relation to her search for a "possible" (Ishiguro, *Never* 138). Searching for recognition in the face of a genetically similar other, Kathy instead finds the recognition she has been seeking in the facial expression of the novel's only racially differentiated character, Miss Emily's Nigerian carer George. Evoking the logic of Darwin's theory of the universality of expression, and thus the common descent of different races, *Never Let Me Go* challenges the contemporary idea that the question of who you are can be answered genetically, that tracing your (racial) genetic ancestry is a way of discovering an authentic, lost identity. Instead, the nonracial recognition between Kathy and George suggests a way of moving beyond the genetic assumptions that underpin much contemporary, racialized identity politics, toward a model of postracial reciprocity that recalls the insights of an older, Darwinian biology. The essay concludes with a consideration of the implications for language, and thus for literature, of Kathy's favoring of an essentially biological mode of communication.

The Racial Aura of *Never Let Me Go*

The paradox of contemporary biotechnology, in which race is at once erased and reinvigorated, has implications for art that takes biotechnology as its subject; race is inevitably present in such art (Weinbaum 217). Alys Weinbaum applies Walter Benjamin's idea—that the aura of the singular artwork is lost in mechanically reproduced art, but that the aura of art is also "that which is artificially produced to replace or fill-in where a loss of 'authority' or 'authenticity' is identified"(217)—to the use of race in biotechnology. She argues for "an uncanny correspondence between aura, as Benjamin develops it, and the concept of race that circulates in our supposedly post-racial times: The present denial of the biological existence of race shapes all invocations of race, effectively making biological race auratic each and every time it appears" (217). Thus, in art that engages with biotechnology, "in a supposedly post-racial age even genomic art without overt racial content is paradoxically haunted by racial aura . . . the denial of the existence of the genetic reality of race is in fact accompanied by racial aura; or put differently, that in the context of post-racialism, race is always already present" (226).

Although *Never Let Me Go* is not quite "genomic art" in that cloning is not its central concern, Weinbaum's analysis is instructive for understanding the peripheral, or indeed "auratic" emergence of race in the novel and for comprehending the novel's capacity to perform a "critical assessment of our supposedly post-racial moment"

(Weinbaum 233). As a novel without "overt racial content," the world of *Never Let Me Go* appears postracial. There is no discussion of race or ethnic differences in England; the only kind of difference is that between the clones and normals, who are not represented as being physically different from each other. It is as though race has been effaced in the manner that Paul Gilroy imagines might be made possible by the new genetics, its signification moving from the visual level of skin color to an internal "cellular" level (47). However, the result is a postracialism premised on a kind of whiteness where, as Shameem Black has suggested, "the world of Hailsham is a world of cultural sameness, a normative ideal of white, middle class culture," which suggests "the triumph of a white, fascistic racial ideal that effectively obliterates the markers of multicultural Britain so common in the late 1990s" (797).[3]

Yet despite the apparent absence of race, the idea of racial difference nevertheless emerges in the predetermined roles that the genetically differentiated clones fulfill. As bodies that have been created to serve the needs of the "normal" population, the clones' experience appears little different from the contemporary exploitation of nonwhite workers, who are often reduced simply to bodies that carry out various forms of undesirable and poorly paid labor.[4] In addition to evoking the increasingly racialized trade in organs for transplantation, where human organs are illegally bought by people in the West from the impoverished in countries such as Turkey, Iraq, and Brazil (Waldby and Mitchell 161), the lives of the clones echo those of the largely unseen populations of poorly paid migrant workers in Britain. Once the students leave Hailsham and live independently in "the Cottages," which are "the remains of a farm" (114), they spend "a lot of the time . . . being chilly" (115) and "huddled around half-dead fires in the small hours" (140). Their only contact with the outside world is Keffers, "this grumpy old guy who turned up two or three times a week in his muddy van to look the place over"(114), who operates much like a gangmaster, providing only the bare minimum the clones need to survive. Following their donations they are sent to "recovery centres" (80) located in peripheral locations such as Dover, which are reminiscent of the detention centers in which asylum seekers are often detained for long periods (including the notorious Dover Immigration Removal Centre). At Hailsham they are given "Culture Briefing" classes where "we had to role play various people we'd find out there—waiters in cafes, policemen and so on" (108), preparing them, in the manner of contemporary citizenship tests that immigrants are required to take, for what is essentially the foreign culture that they are about to enter following their isolation at Hailsham.

The correspondence between Britain's nonwhite immigrant populations and the experiences of the clones is most explicitly drawn, however, at the end of the novel in the first and only portrayal of racial difference. Kathy and Tommy track down their former Guardians, Madame and Miss Emily, in the mistaken belief that as Hailsham students they might be able to defer their donations for a year or so by proving that they are genuinely in love. The only time that the clones are given a clear, unambiguous understanding of their situation, this moment is the most dramatic of the novel. Yet Kathy's confrontation with her Guardians is repeatedly interrupted by the presence of another character, whose existence is first indicated by Kathy's observation as she enters the Guardians' house that "it was like a servant of some sort had got the place ready for the night-time" (244), then by "a gruff male voice," which "called something from upstairs" (245). The character is George, a nurse and carer to the wheelchair-bound Miss Emily, and his presence might be unremarkable were it not for the fact that he is described as being Nigerian.

Although we are only presented with a brief glimpse into George's life, there are clear parallels between his situation and that of Kathy. Like the clones, George is a carer and as the only character differentiated by race in the novel, his ethnicity seems linked to the social role that he inhabits. As Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg have argued in an essay on the cultural contexts which have made cloning conceivable, "One can also imagine the cloning of nonwhite, able-bodied, good-natured, caring, docile, moderately smart but not too intelligent bodies to do the service work that those more privileged seem to demand more and more. Whereas biological cloning is still for the most part a fiction waiting to be realized, the cultural cloning of preferred types to inhabit segregated spaces is everyday practice, especially among social elites" (1068). George is the culturally cloned equivalent of the genetically cloned Kathy; he is not only a carer but a servant forced to respond to the barked orders of his mistresses: "'I've told you what to do. Just do as I explained'" (245) and "'George! George!'"(261). Where Kathy must care for her fellow clones as they slowly die through donating before sacrificing her own body, George, circumscribed by his racial difference, is destined to serve and care for Miss Emily. Ann Whitehead has noted how the novel portrays a system of care analogous to Britain's care homes, which are often staffed by migrant workers without citizenship (62). George represents this new underclass of Britain's migrant workers. His shadowy, voiceless presence in Kathy's narrative—a "faint thump" (244), "muffled" (245), the "footsteps" (253) answering the door—reflects not only his peripheral status in the world of the normals, but also the increasingly peripheral nature of race itself. George's

condition exposes the pitfalls of the postracialism that the biological disavowal of race has enabled. Removing the concept of race, as David Theo Goldberg has argued, does not remove the material conditions of race or racism ("Call and Response" 92). Instead, the denial of race results in "racism without race," making racism and the social inequalities that feed into it more difficult to identify (Goldberg, *Threat* 23). The near absence of racial difference in the novel only serves to highlight the presence of racial discrimination as the model for the clones' subjugation and oppression.

The novel's critique of the contradictions of postracialism is extended in its allusion to the historical racisms and exclusionary modes of humanism that provide a precedent for the contemporary forms of dehumanization that the denial of race enables. If the inescapability of the clones' situation corresponds to the contemporary exploitation of migrant workers, the way in which their humanity is queried and judged during the course of their education recalls the experiences of the colonized. Albert Memmi writes of the schooling of the colonized child that the "memory which is assigned him is certainly not that of his people. The history which is taught him is not his own . . . Everything seems to have taken place out of his country" (105), and it is this sense of alienation and externally acquired habits of memory that characterize the educational system of the "colony" of Hailsham. The clones are taught about the different counties of an England they have never seen through romanticized "picture calendars" (64), which consist of images of "little villages with streams going through them, white monuments on hillsides, old churches beside fields" (64) that Kathy holds on to once she has left Hailsham: "it's amazing, even now, after all these miles I've covered as a carer, the extent to which my idea of the various counties is still set by these pictures Miss Emily put up on her easel" (64–65). Given Kathy's familiarity with an alternative England in which she is more likely to be "having coffee in a service station, staring at the motorway through the big windows" (113), her preservation of the former image reflects the gap between expectation and reality that has often characterized the immigrant experience of the mother country, the result of an education designed to serve the needs of the colonizer.

The functional role of the students' education is particularly apparent in the emphasis placed on their ability to be creative and to produce art, again recalling the experience of the colonized or the enslaved. At the beginning of the novel Kathy explains the young students' preoccupation with the arts, "Paintings, drawings, pottery; all sorts of 'sculptures'" (16), on which they are encouraged by their Guardians to focus their attention. Their creations are then sold at "Exchanges" (16) where the work of all the students is displayed and

bought by other students, with the best pieces being taken away for the mysterious Madame's "Gallery" (31). In her school days, Kathy reveals that "how much you were liked and respected, had to do with how good you were at 'creating'" (16). The clones come to attribute great significance to their art, convincing themselves that it might be a qualification for getting their organ donations deferred because, according to Miss Emily, "things like pictures, poetry, all that kind of stuff, she said they revealed what you were like inside. She said they revealed your soul" (173). It is not until the end of the novel that the real purpose of the gallery is explained by Miss Emily: "We took away your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to prove you had souls at all" (255).

The Guardians' reduction of the students' art and creativity to functioning as evidence of their humanity echoes the artificial relationship between art and humanity that historically characterized Europeans' judgment of the nonwhite subject. Discussing the way that the humanness of black Africans was assessed by Europeans during the Enlightenment, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. writes that:

> Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, Europeans had wondered aloud whether or not the African "Species of Men", as they most commonly put it, could ever create formal literature, could ever master "the arts and sciences." If they could, the argument ran, then the African variety of humanity and the European variety were fundamentally related. If not, then it seemed clear that the African was destined by nature to be a slave. (8)

Gates goes on to give the example of George Moses Horton, an African American slave poet in the 1820s whose master promised him his freedom in exchange for an adequate return on sales of his poetry (9). As Gates explains, "Writing, for these slaves, was not an activity of mind; rather, it was a commodity which they were forced to trade for their humanity" (9). Such limited criteria for what constitutes art, and therefore what constitutes the human, is little different to the function performed by the clones' art.[5] Far from proving their humanity, the hope the students invest in art and education only reveals their subjection to a debased liberal ideology premised on a limited idea of what constitutes the human. While the clones' art is unable to liberate them, *Never Let Me Go* might itself be considered "art that paves the way for liberation" (Weinbaum 219) in critically apprehending racial aura and making its spectral presence visible (219). In recalling the historical ways in which the nonwhite subject has been excluded from the human and the contemporary figurative cloning of a racialized underclass, Ishiguro's portrayal of the clones

exposes the ambivalent nature of race in science and in British society more generally. The seemingly postracial world of the novel reveals itself to be a world saturated in forms of racial differentiation and discrimination, displaced onto the genetically differentiated clones whose condition reflects the "paradoxical persistence of geneticized racial thinking in our supposedly post-racial moment" (Weinbaum 217).

Identifying with the Other: Race Versus Face

The implications of Ishiguro's racial analogy do not end, however, with laying bare the tensions inherent within the current postracial era. In revealing how race continues to be central to questions about what and who is human, the novel presents a vision of how human relations, and what it means to be human, might be understood without allusion to racial difference. This is achieved through Kathy's narrative style. For a number of critics, the banality and repetition of Kathy's narration challenges the (falsely) humanist education and artwork that the clones are brought up to revere.[6] I suggest that the challenge of Kathy's narration does not reside solely in its apparent inhumanity but that her emphasis on descriptions of facial expressions (in place of physical characteristics) enables her to challenge the conventions of the art and education that have ultimately contributed to, rather than ameliorated, her oppression. Significantly, her narration also places an emphasis on a universal human trait—facial expression—above physical attributes including racial differences. Recalling Darwin's emphasis on the unity of man over racial distinctions and difference outlined in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals,* Ishiguro demonstrates an implicit understanding of the historical, scientific precedents for the alternative form of nonracial and nongenetic kinship that the novel proposes.

Kathy's narration represents her experience in a way that evades the codes, conventions, and expectations of the traditional education she has been given and that has contributed to her oppression. The kind of writing that Kathy has been taught to do is at the forefront of her mind as she narrates her life story in the present:

> Sometimes I'll be driving on a long, weaving road across marshland, or maybe past rows of furrowed fields, the sky big and grey and never changing mile after mile, and I find I'm thinking about my essay, the one I was supposed to be writing back then, when we were at the Cottages . . . When I think about my essay today, what I do is go over it in some detail: I may think of a completely new approach I could have taken, or about different writers and books I

> could have focused on . . . Just lately, I've even toyed with the idea of going back and working on it, once I'm not a carer any more and I've got the time. (113–14)

However there is little evidence in her writing of the intellectual training she received at Hailsham. Despite revealing her familiarity has with *The Odessey*, *1001 Nights*, and the novels of Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, Edna O'Brien, Margaret Drabble, and James Joyce, Kathy does not adopt the techniques for storytelling or stylistic innovation represented in these wide ranging literary texts. Instead, as John Mullan argues, "for all her earnest reading, Kathy H.'s narrative voice feels deprived of resources" (106). From the first line of the novel—"My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been a carer now for over eleven years" (3)—to the last—"I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be" (282)—Kathy writes in a mundane style that would seem to suggest a limited capacity for creativity and critical thinking.

Yet it is creativity that has been functionalized in Kathy's experience. She recounts how the essays the students were told to write were designed to "absorb us properly for anything up to two years" (113), and that "how well you were settling in at the Cottages—how well you were *coping*—was somehow reflected by how many books you'd read"(120). Distracting the students from their impending deaths, their essays and reading are merely an extension of an education that has prevented them from reaching a true understanding of their situation. Denied the possibility of freedom through art of the kind given to the slave poet George Moses Horton, Kathy produces an artwork that challenges the conventions of the canonical, European literature she has studied. Specifically, her description of faces challenges the emphasis in much Victorian literature (the topic of her essay) on physical features as representative of character, the product of the contemporaneous science of physiognomy (Dames 101).

Kathy rarely describes the physical characteristics of the people she presents in her narrative and never refers to race or ethnicity. Only the physical features of the Guardians and the veterans at the Cottages are described and then only in very basic terms. Kathy describes the same traits, height and hair, each time: Madame "was a tall, narrow woman with short hair" (32), Miss Emily "wasn't especially tall . . . she wore her silvery hair tied back" (39), "Chrissie was a tall girl who was quite beautiful when she stood up to her full height" (139), and Rodney "went around with his hair tied back in a ponytail" (139). These repetitive, unimaginative physical descriptions highlight the limited importance of the physical body in Kathy's psyche. Awaiting the harvesting of their organs, Kathy and the other

clones are emotionally detached from their own bodies, which are merely functional rather than individual, an attitude reflected in their emotionally disconnected approach to sex: "sex had got like 'being creative' had been a few years earlier. It felt like if you hadn't done it yet, you ought to, and quickly" (95–96). Devoid of meaning, bodies do not provide or add to an understanding of character.

Rather than describing physical features, Kathy instead describes facial expressions. Her narrative abounds with descriptions of people's countenances and her interpretation of the thoughts and feelings that these looks express. Typical of this is Kathy's recollection of an encounter with Miss Emily: "I remember when I went to tell Miss Emily my chosen topic was Victorian novels, I hadn't really thought about it much and I could see she knew it. But she just gave me one of her searching stares and said nothing more" (113). Kathy "sees" in order to understand the thoughts of others. Having been brought up being "told and not told" (87) about the true purpose of her life, she learns to interpret facial expressions, which reveal more than what is said. When the students joke among themselves about electric fences in World War II prison camps, Kathy is initially alerted to the possibility that Hailsham's fences could be electrified through Miss Lucy's look: "I went on watching Miss Lucy through all this, and I could see, just for a second, a ghostly expression come over her face as she watched the class in front of her" (77). Kathy's inability to articulate her own feelings (for example "I wasn't keen on Ruth going with them to Norfolk, though I couldn't really say why" [143]), which is evident everywhere in her narrative, is the product of an upbringing in which words mask, or cannot convey, the full picture of what someone is feeling. As a result, in place of dialogue Kathy meditates on facial expression. As she humiliates and mocks Ruth about her belief in the potential of her possible (the humans they are copied from), she monitors Ruth's face for a reaction: "I glanced at Ruth beside me. There was no anger in her eyes, just a kind of wariness. There was even a sort of hope, I thought, that when the poster appeared, it would be perfectly innocuous—something that reminded us of Hailsham, something like that. I could see all of this in her face, the way it didn't quite settle on any one expression, but hovered tentatively" (225).

Although she is somehow conditioned to see what is not said, Kathy also privileges this form of nonverbal communication because it brings her closer to an understanding of the human soul than any of her art or writing. Ultimately it is her ability to interpret facial expressions (rather than words or texts) that gives her a reliable and honest understanding of human emotion. Darwin privileges the facial over the verbal in this way when he writes: "We readily per-

ceive sympathy in others by their expression; our sufferings are thus mitigated and our pleasures increased; and mutual good feeling is thus strengthened. The movements of expression give vividness and energy to our spoken words. They reveal the thoughts and intentions of others more truly than do words, which may be falsified" (364). As Ruth lies dying after a donation, Kathy observes:

> just for a few seconds, no more, she looked straight at me and she knew exactly who I was. It was one of those little islands of lucidity donors sometimes get to in the midst of their ghastly battles, and she looked at me, just for that moment, and although she didn't speak, I knew what her look meant. So I said to her: 'It's okay, I'm going to do it, Ruth. I'm going to become Tommy's carer as soon as I can.' I said it under my breath, because I didn't think she'd hear the words anyway, even if I shouted them. But my hope was that with our gazes locked as they were for those few seconds, she'd read my expression exactly as I'd read hers. (232)

It is through reading expressions and locking gazes that Kathy attempts to form a relationship with another based on a reciprocity of feeling, emotion, and understanding in which words are insignificant. She draws on this capacity at the end of the novel when she encounters Madame and they discuss the moment at Hailsham when Madame catches Kathy singing "Never Let Me Go" while cradling a pillow. Attempting to break the barrier between clones and normals, Kathy tells Madame, "I think I know what you're thinking about," and notes that "Madame's expression didn't change as she kept staring into my face" (266). Although Madame initially resists Kathy's attempt to establish a mutual interpretation of the moment by mocking Kathy's attempt to read through seeing, "A mind-reader. You should be on the stage" (265), their meeting ends when Madame, overcoming her fear of the clones, empathizes and physically connects with Kathy by looking: "She reached out her hand, all the while staring into my face, and placed it on my cheek. I could feel a trembling go all through her body, but she kept her hand where it was, and I could see again tears appearing in her eyes"(267).

Kathy's looking is tied to, and perhaps also derived from, another kind of looking that she performs in her search for a possible. Throughout the novel, Kathy's sense of alienation from the world of the normals is linked to her inability to find a reflection, a lack caused by the absence of a genetic parent or ancestor. Searching for recognition and familiarity in a world that deems them to be less than human, Kathy and the other clones look for their possibles,

who they believe could be discovered at any moment. Kathy looks in pornographic magazines, explaining how "I hardly saw the contorted bodies, because I was focusing on the faces. Even in the little adverts for videos or whatever tucked away to the side, I checked each model's face before moving on" (132), and it is during this time at the Cottages that the students take a trip to Norfolk after a sighting of a possible for Ruth. Kathy explains that, "we all of us, to varying degrees, believed that when you saw the person you were copied from, you'd get *some* insight into who you were deep down, and maybe too, you'd see something of what your life held in store" (137–38). Once again, seeing is understanding for Kathy, whose search for reciprocity and recognition in the faces of others is caught up in her search for genetic recognition.

However, instead of discovering who she is by finding a possible, the only person in whom Kathy can find a likeness is George. It is through a comment made by Miss Emily that the reader learns of George's racial difference and Kathy's reaction to it. In describing her first post-Hailsham encounter with Kathy, Miss Emily says: "I recognized you, but you may well not have recognized me. In fact, Kathy H., once not so long ago, I passed you sitting on that bench out there, and you certainly didn't recognise me then. You glanced at George, the big Nigerian man pushing me. Oh yes, you had quite a good look at him, and he at you" (251). Instead of recognizing Miss Emily, the Guardian for whom she has been searching, Kathy recognizes herself in George. Through their silent face-to-face looking Kathy gains access to a sense of kinship that goes beyond the confines of the genetic connection she has hitherto been seeking in a possible. The recognition between Kathy and George is based on their mutual exclusion on the basis of their genetic and racial alienation, yet it is also a recognition that negates the significance of these differences. Privileging facial expression over physical appearance enables Kathy to recognize that understanding who she is might be achieved in the recognition of shared human experience, in a nonbiological and nonracial affinity.

In this way *Never Let Me Go* offers an alternative view of kinship that challenges the idea that understanding who you are can be achieved through the genes, in tracing a (racial) genetic ancestry.[7] This has been the claim of genetic ancestry tracing companies, a claim popularized in television programs such as the 2003 BBC2 documentary in which three Black Britons trace their ancestries through DNA analysis, in what the program makers describe as a "quest to recover lost identity" and an attempt to discover "who they are and where they came from" (*Motherland*). Stuart Murray has identified the problematic tendency for genetic explanations of personhood and kinship

to become natural, arguing that "Because genomic vocabularies have so pervaded the public sphere, it is impossible not to understand the self as a problem in these terms." The silent bond between Kathy and George resists the prevailing conception that DNA is the key to the self. Instead, they embrace the kind of ethics of care that Murray argues is needed in an era in which new reproductive technologies have recast family relationships in genetic terms. They eschew "a self that uncritically does the bidding of those ideologies we call family, nation, or race . . . however 'naturalized' or 'biologized' these terms may become" in favour of an ethical care which "will mobilize these as the tropes that they are, and seek new relations, new modes, and new terms by which we might once again ask the question of the good life" (Murray). The seemingly natural connection between race and identity is broken in the nonracial recognition between Kathy and George, creating a postracial vision that, rather than being based on a denial of racial inequality, gestures toward the kind of affinities that Donna Haraway imagines might emerge from a unity between social relations, science, and technology: "a self-consciously constructed space that cannot affirm the capacity to act on the basis of natural identification, but only on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity, or political kinship"(156). While Black argues that "the students' loss of cultural specificity signals one tactic by which they lose their purchase on human identity" (797), it is rather the belief that such cultural or ethnic forms of identification are self-evidently human that Ishiguro's portrayal of Kathy and George confronts. Who you are, the novel suggests, is determined not in the promise of a recovered genetic ancestry, but by your interactions and affiliations in the present and the shared experiences on which such affiliations are built.

Reading Faces, Reading Literature

Kathy's emphasis on a universal, biological means of expressing emotion has, however, implications beyond repudiating the primacy of racial forms of identification. Her emphasis on facial expression overrides the articulation of emotion in words, apparently calling into question the efficacy of the novel's own communicative means. This tension is explored at various points in the novel where the value of words, writing, or literature is undermined. One such moment is when Kathy is at Hailsham and catches Miss Lucy

> leaning over in concentration, forehead very low, arms up on the surface, scrawling furious lines over a page with a pencil. Underneath the heavy black lines I could see neat blue handwriting. As I watched, she went on scrubbing the

> pencil point over the paper, almost in the way we did shading in Art, except her movements were much more angry, as if she didn't mind gouging right through the sheet. (89)

Miss Lucy scrawls over the students' work in anger at the false ideals they have developed through their education; their writing is a sham that reduces, rather than proves, their humanity. Kathy, who assesses the situation in her usual way—"I could see her face was flushed, but there were no traces of tears" (89)—narrates how she was confused and upset by what she had seen but adds, "if you'd asked me to define just what I was so upset about, I wouldn't have been able to explain"(90). It is precisely because their writing leaves the students unable to express their true feelings in words that Miss Lucy reacts against it; Kathy at some level understands this, which is why she responds emotionally to Miss Lucy's "flushed" face.

Another such incident occurs when Kathy describes the experience of reading *Daniel Deronda* at the Cottages, around the time that she and the other students are struggling to make sense of their origins and look for their possibles. She makes no explicit connection between this discussion of possibles, of genetic ancestors or parents, and her reading of *Daniel Deronda*, the tale of a young man adopted at birth who becomes involved with a Jewish family only to discover that he is Jewish himself, giving a sense of purpose to his hitherto directionless life. Instead, she simply remarks that she had "not been enjoying it very much" (121). For Kathy, reading *Daniel Deronda* is part of the competitive reading the students are forced to do in order to prove how well they are coping; its meaning, the way that it might relate to the human condition (in this case Kathy's) or how Kathy as a reader might empathize with its characters is erased, despite the fact that the resonances are clear.[8]

These moments draw our attention to the assumptions embedded in the act of reading and the expectation that literature and writing will signify something to the person reading it. That Kathy's reading of faces is more significant than her reading of books is not an indication that the significance of literature is diminished; it is, rather, part of an alternative mode of interpretation that might act as a model for our own reading. Derek Attridge is instructive here: he writes of a "parallel between creativity and responsiveness" in literature and argues that "creatively responding to the other . . . involves the shifting of ingrained modes of understanding in order to take account of that which was systematically excluded by them" (123). Kathy's responsiveness to others, particularly George, is enabled by her creative method of describing facial expressions in place of physical characteristics, involving a "shifting of ingrained modes

of understanding." In this, Ishiguro provides an example of how we, as readers, might creatively respond to and interpret the novel. It is in looking and seeing beyond ingrained assumptions about how literature should work, seeing beyond what appears as a banal and unremarkable narrative mode, that the reader, like Kathy, is able to read differently and see how Kathy reads differently in interpreting what is written on the face. Attridge argues that literature is effective even if it "solves no problems and saves no souls" (4), a moot point in the case of Kathy and her fellow clones; although literature itself cannot save them or prove they have souls, it remains effective as a means through which Kathy can challenge and subvert the very idea that it can save them.

Yet the novel also takes us beyond the more abstract responsiveness espoused by Attridge toward a biologically grounded conception of recognition and human similarity that reveals literature's ability to apprehend the human experience of facial expression. In the concluding sections of *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Darwin reflects on the difficulty of describing specific expressions, which, in the context of the novel, reminds us of Kathy's limited mode of description:

> M. Lemoine argues that, if man possessed an innate knowledge of expression, authors and artists would not have found it so difficult, as is notoriously the case, to describe and depict the characteristic signs of each particular state of mind. But this does not seem to me a valid argument. We may actually behold the expression changing in an unmistakable manner in a man or animal, and yet be quite unable, as I know from experience, to analyse the nature of the change . . . It has often struck me as a curious fact that so many shades of expression are instantly recognized without any conscious process of analysis on our part. No one, I believe, can clearly describe a sullen or sly expression; yet many observers are unanimous that these expressions can be recognized in the various races of man. . . . If, then, great ignorance of details does not prevent our recognizing with certainty and promptitude various expressions, I do not see how this ignorance can be advanced as an argument that our knowledge, though vague and general, is not innate. (358–59)

The lack of specificity in Kathy's descriptions of faces reflects her lack of "any conscious process of analysis"; hers is an innate, human reaction that would seem to prove Darwin's point that a "great ignorance of details" (which arguably defines Kathy's experience) does

not prevent the recognition of expression. Kathy's sparse language thus highlights her human ability to respond, feel, and recognize, so that as readers we feel more than empathy toward Kathy, as she feels more than empathy toward George: we recognize ourselves in the life of a clone. In this, the novel provides an example of what literature can do, of its value, in an age when the "book of life" is not written in words but in a genetic code. Rather than simply providing a warning about the dystopic potential of new genetic technologies, *Never Let Me Go* acknowledges our human biological similarity and harnesses the power of facial expressions to demonstrate the postracial potential of a science that is becoming more and more racialized. As it speaks to such contemporary debates about race and science while drawing on the logic of an older, Darwinian science of facial expression, the novel recalls an insight from Eliot's *Daniel Deronda,* which, in this case, does signify: "often the grand meanings of faces as well as of written words may lie chiefly in the impressions of those who look on them" (153).

Notes

1. For some of the most influential work on this subject, see Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen and Martha C. Nussbaum.
2. Gabriele Griffin is the exception. Her article sets out to address "how science figures both in this particular novel and in contemporary culture more widely" (645).
3. Black has also noted the peripheral references to racial inequality in the novel, arguing that it "speaks to the fate of postcolonial and migrant laborers who sustain the privileges of First World economies" (796) and that "Ishiguro's characteristic style, renders these resemblances to the current globalizing world conspicuous through their near-invisibility" (797).
4. Such labor is, of course, also carried out by white (often Eastern European immigrant) workers in contemporary Britain, but, as will become clear, it is specifically to the large populations of racially differentiated migrant workers that the novel refers.
5. Martin Puchner puts it slightly differently: "the teachers encourage students to produce art works, 'to prove you had souls at all' a belief that may echo W. E. B. Du Bois's declaration that 'until the art of the black folk compels recognition they will not be rated as human'" (37).
6. Black has argued that "Ishiguro's inhuman style" is an ethical move that suggests that "only by recognizing what in ourselves is mechanical, manufactured, and replicated—in a traditional sense, not fully

human—will we escape the barbarities committed in the name of preserving purely human life" (786). Similarly, Rebecca Walkowitz has claimed that Kathy's narration underscores the "value of unoriginal expression" (224), and that Ishiguro's point is that "it is inadequate, and even unethical, to treat uniqueness as the defining quality of art, culture, and human life" (235).

7. John Mullan makes a similar point: "the novel imagines the speculative attachments that might grow in place of all natural connection to others. It is a telling fictional enquiry in a culture that is preoccupied, in any number of popular forms, with the 're-discovery' of genealogy" (113).

8. In a reflection of Kathy's detached relationship to *Daniel Deronda*, Ishiguro himself eschews reader expectations that *Daniel Deronda* is important to *Never Let Me Go*, claiming in an interview that Kathy's reading of the novel has "no real significance" ("I'm Sorry I Can't Say More" 124).

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